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ABSTRACT

Librarianship is the management of knowledge, not the management of nature, i.e., it is controlled by ideas, not by phenomena. The man/document interface provides a key for creating the philosophy of librarianship and a clue to the intellectual nature of the library profession. Because librarianship occurs whenever ideas are reused, librarians must refer to the mind-body problem to learn how ideas are created, used, expressed, communicated, stored, and retrieved by human beings. One approach is to use Karl Popper's three-world philosophy, which sorts the whole of reality into three distinct and logically separate worlds: World 1, which includes everything physical; World 2, which includes everything nonphysical and subjective; and World 3, which includes everything nonphysical and objective. Identifying the basic components of librarianship with Popper's three worlds reveals that knowledge must be communicated by using the physical resources of World 1 as symbols which refer the mind to ideas in Worlds 2 and 3. The symbolic interaction of physical symbols with ideative referents provides the mind's only means of access to the private knowledge of other minds or to cultural knowledge. With this understanding, librarians ideally will work with the formal abstractions of knowledge through an instrumental physics of expression as intellectual cartographers whose function is to map the human cultural environment. Twenty-four endnotes and two diagrams--one depicting librarianship as a field of study and as a professional activity, and the other depicting the three worlds of Karl Popper--are included. (KM)

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LIBRARIANSHIP AND THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

By H. Curtis Wright

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LIBRARIANSHIP AND THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT
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The Man/document Interface.--Librarianship is an epistemological discipline based on the knowledge aspect of human life. It is thus a philosophical enterprise derived from the study of man: it has never been, is not now, and can never become a science because it studies the imperceptible abstractions of thought which determine the specifically human forms of rational behavior, not the observable phenomena of instinctive behavior shared by human beings with the nonhuman animals. It is securely tied to the man/document interface, which generates all of the noetic patterns and formal relationships arising from the specifically human habit of creating and referring to various kinds of artificially recorded information. Librarianship is therefore created by the knowledge functions of the distinctively human animal because it is grounded upon man's unique capacity for conceptual and imagistic reasoning. Man, by virtue of his knowledge functions, is the only informational animal: he not only uses knowledge for personal enjoyment but employs it as a rational instrument for controlling the empirical manifestations of his own life and the physical conditions of his world. We are not fully human, in other words, unless we are constantly exploring our natural and cultural environments, evaluating our situations, attaching meaning to our experiences, constructing intelligent behavior by what we know, and directing our actions toward the realization of rationally desirable ends.

The man/document interface provides a key for creating the philosophy of librarianship and a clue to the intellectual nature of the library profession. It establishes librarianship as an act of mediation (and the librarian as a mediator) between human beings and their documents; and it raises the fundamental question of librarianship: "What is a document that a man may know it, and a man that he may know a document?"[1] This question identifies three profoundly philosophical problems whose solutions define the librarian's minimal knowledge requirements: (1) What is man? (2) What is knowing? and (3) What is documentation? These "what-is" questions explore philosophical issues which require intellectual solutions; they do not investigate physical problems with empirical solutions.[2] Librarians must clearly understand the nature of man, the nature of knowledge, and the nature of documentation. But the nature of man, first of all, presupposes the study

of man as a metaphysical thinking apparatus, not as a mechanics of physical activity: it is therefore derived from the philosophical concept of man as a thinker who knows things, not from the scientific image of man as a behaver who does things. The knowledge problems of librarianship, secondly, are necessarily philosophical because librarians must deal with second-order knowledge about knowledge, not with first-order knowledge about phenomena. Librarians, that is to say, are concerned with human subjectivity, not with cosmic objectivity; and their knowledge is therefore derived from abstractions originating in the mind, not from sensations. The nature of documentation, finally, which cannot be learned from the analytical study of natural phenomena, must be inferred from the human uses of physical data as symbolic instruments for recording information artificially. This involves the psychophysical interaction of mentation with physical symbols and includes all of the ways in which human beings put ideas on hold for future reference; and that involves the librarians, for better or for worse, in the mind-body problem of philosophy because physical symbols belong to the atomic world of bodies in motion whereas their ideative referents constitute the realities of mind. The document, in other words, is any artificial means of putting ideas into storage for reuse. Man's involvement with documents is therefore explained by the human habit of reusing information. This habit presupposes the fundamental usefulness of knowledge to human beings. It also confronts librarians with the immateriality of ideas[3] because librarianship, to put it simply, is the reuse of ideas; and ideas cannot be reused unless they are first created, used, expressed, communicated, stored, and retrieved by human beings. Librarians must therefore learn, if they can, how all of this takes place, for librarianship occurs whenever ideas are reused and cannot occur when they are not reused.

The Mind-body Problem and the Two Worlds of Philosophy.--The mind-body problem is the result of a shotgun wedding, the forced marriage of form-philosophy and matter-philosophy which has given birth to antithetical world views in the Western intellectual tradition. Matter-philosophy was systematized during the Golden Age by Democritus, who reduced all reality to a physical mechanics of atoms, the bodies in motion which constitute the matter and energy of the cosmos and the subject matter of science; form-philosophy was systematized during the same period by Plato, who regarded

physical phenomena as the distorted manifestations of an ideal world whose nonphysical realities consist of intellectual patterns known as Forms (*ideai*); and the unhappy union of these contradictory perspectives has produced the jealous sisters of philosophy, the conflicting world views of Democritus and Plato whose love-hate relationships account for most of the triumphs and perversities of Western thought. The ultimate issue of this forced union is an unresolvable paradox, a fundamental dichotomy which has permanently polarized philosophers over the irreconcilable contradictions of physical monism and psychophysical dualism in the West. Zeller explains how this happened when the original assumption of monistic unity in Greek thought was explicitly falsified by the dualism of its historical systems.

> Greek philosophy shows us the formative conditions of critical thought, in which an obstinate distinction between its two elements and their disruptive separation develop from the supposed serenity of their unified existence.... The original premise of Greek philosophy, the starting point from which it proceeds, is that harmonious relationship of mind with matter which is the distinguishing characteristic of classical culture generally; and it is only step by step, and virtually against her will, that philosophy sees a most basic distinction forced upon her.... Thus, *the ultimate result of Greek philosophy is a dualism*, which, for all of her critical efforts to resist it, she can no longer overcome....
>
> Since the original presupposition of [mind-matter unity in] Greek thought is progressively validated by the distinctive features which determine its character, the inability of Greek philosophy to reconcile its contradictions satisfactorily must also be explained by that selfsame presupposition, from which it never frees itself: the unity of mind and matter, which it requires and presupposes, is clearly the unbroken unity of the classical world view; and when this [monistic] view of reality is sundered, philosophy can no longer escape the dualism which, from its own point of view, has no right to exist in the first place.[4]

This breakdown of unbreakable unity in the classical *Weltanschauung*, by creating *two* world views instead of one, has created the mind-body problem of philosophy--one of the most basic and persistent contradictories in the entire history of thought. The Western civilizations, accordingly, have struggled ceaselessly with the perpetual problem of relating the world man lives in to the world that lives in man: their only escape has been an occasional retreat into radical monism, since the mind-body problem becomes a nonproblem only if everything is reduced to physical motions, as in the matter-monism of Heraclitus, or to intellectual patterns, as in the form-monism of Parmenides. Every other philosophical position must face the

differing realities of mind and matter and wrestle with the problem of determining, if possible, how they relate to one another.

Modern philosophy has been wholly unable to avoid the mind-body problem. Despising the dualism of Plato's two-world view, it has investigated only the monistic concretions of Democritus--the physical world of bodies in motion, where everything exists in a temporal process of Becoming perceived by the senses and characterized by impermanence and change; but its propositional system, which includes everything it has ever thought or communicated as thought, belongs to Plato's other world--the eternal world of nonphysical abstractions which exist in a permanent state of Being discerned only by reflection. The inescapable necessity of dealing with both of these worlds has been described by Bertrand Russell.

> The world of [formal] being is unchangeable, rigid, exact, delightful to the mathematician, the logician, the builder of metaphysical systems.... The world of [physical] existence is fleeting, vague, without sharp boundaries, without any clear plan or arrangement.... According to our temperaments, we shall prefer ... the one or the other. The one we do not prefer will probably seem to us a pale shadow of the one we prefer.... But the truth is that both have the same claim on our impartial attention, both are real, and both are important.[5]

But <u>how</u> are these worlds related? That problem has never been adequately resolved, although the modern philosophers have provided a partial solution to it. Impatient with the metaphysical theories of their predecessors, they abandoned traditional philosophy and joined in a massive effort to find a valid <u>method</u>[6] for getting at the truth, regardless of its source. "They were successful in the search for a sound method;" but once discovered, "it became the method of science,"[7] not a universal method for disclosing the truth about everything.

> The difficulty was that philosophers continued to disagree on everything <u>except</u> the method of science.... To possess a method is to have a way of deciding what questions may sensibly be raised, and how to progress toward definite answers. Scientists obviously have such a way [of deciding scientific questions].... As a result of the concentration on method, a few principles of sound inductive inquiry became firmly established; [and] from that time on they have commanded respect from every seeker for truth in the realm of observable fact.[8]

Thus, the methods of science have become effective and appropriate for obtaining information about the physical subject matters of science. But <u>all other aspects of the mind-body problem remain unresolved</u>. This fact has tremendous implications for librarianship and library education. It means,

among many other things, that librarianship can neither be understood nor explained without reference to the mind-body problem. Librarians are clearly epistemological dualists, apologists for the human mind[9] who work with the formal abstractions of knowledge by means of its physical manifestations; they are definitely not physical realists with primary or exclusive interests in the mechanical and electrochemical workings of nature.

Popper's Three-world Philosophy.--Karl Popper sorts the whole of reality into three distinct and logically separate worlds by dividing Plato's spirit-world of imperceptible forms into its subjective and objective components. World 1 includes everything physical: it contains all natural realities--the matter and energy of the entire cosmos, which comprises (1) all physical objects, processes, forces, force fields, and conditions; (2) all organic and inorganic configurations of matter and energy (including human brains); and (3) all artifacts produced by human beings. World 2 includes everything nonphysical and subjective: it contains all psychological realities--all of the subjective processes of knowing in the private world of the individual human mind; it is the personal world of your own intelligence, "the world of your inner spiritual life, the world you know and live in all the time you are conscious, from the moment you wake up until you go to sleep;"[10] it is a vigorously active world which comprises everything you can think, feel, create, remember, or imagine; and it can only be "known in others by inference from symbolic communications."[11] World 3 includes everything nonphysical and objective: it contains all cultural realities--all of the objective products of knowing, which include all ideas of any kind that are available for study outside of the individual consciousness; it comprises all that is human around us and everything created by human minds, including all forms of the fine and useful arts. "We live in the cultural environment of World 3," which is just as objective and "every bit as real as the physical environment of World 1."[12] You exhibit World-3 behavior whenever you communicate anything by language, or in any other way, because World 3 is the whole of civilized culture.

> World 3 is the world of knowledge in the objective sense.... It comprises the expressions of scientific, literary and artistic ideas ... preserved in codified form in libraries ... and in all records of human culture. In their material composition of paper and ink, books are in World 1, but the knowledge encoded in the print is in World 3, and ... [the situation is similar] for pictures and all other artefacts.... World 3 comprises the records of the intellectual efforts of all mankind through all ages.... [It is] the cultural heritage [of the human race].[13]

Human beings can interact directly with their physical environment, according to Popper, and indirectly with their cultural environment (by using data from their physical environment as communicative symbols); but those environments can interact with each other "only through human intervention."[14] He rejects psychophysical parallelism, which is based on the monistic outlook of scientific matter-philosophy, because it isolates the natural and formal orders, regards them as different manifestations of the same thing, and prevents them from influencing one another in meaningful ways;[15] and he accepts psychophysical interactionism, also known as dualist interactionism, or "the commonsense view that people are composed of two distinct and separate entities."[16] Thus, "the nonmaterial entity from World 2, the world of the spirit, is the self-conscious mind--the soul or psyche which constitutes the self;" and "the material entity from World 1, the world of physical realities, is the human brain and the body it controls."[17] This ties the human aspect of the mind-body problem to Popper's "brain-mind liaison,"[18] the frontier of interaction between the mind and its brain which enables the mind to manipulate its physical environment by controlling the brain that controls its body: it explains how the mind can create knowledge subjectively in World 2, express its overt manifestations in World 1 by encoding it in the physical symbols of subjective reports, and store its ideative referents objectively in World 3; and the process is reversible--you can observe the physical symbols of objective knowledge in World 1, recognize their ideative referents in World 3, and reconstruct them as subjective knowledge in World 2. By this we see how the imperceptible meanings, concepts, memories, images, feelings, and beliefs which constitute our personal experiences can be expressed for others to contemplate, how we can contemplate the expressions of other people, "and thus how whole new complexes of thoughts and understandings can be created;"[19] and we can also

see how librarianship is derived from the human ability to create and manipulate ideas.

The Arena of Librarianship.--All of the librarian's professional functions are implicit in the man-document interface. It has been analyzed by Rawski, for example, into seven elements and two views of librarianship.[20] The seven elements include three indispensable components (patrons, objective knowledge, and librarians), three necessary interfaces (the interactions of patrons-with-knowledge, librarians-with-knowledge, and patrons-with-librarians), and an integrated result (the system which emerges from the essential components and interfaces of librarianship). Everything begins with man as an informational animal: the cultural environment, which gives rise to librarianship, is created only because human beings are thinkers who must know all kinds of things in order to live by what they know and to control their actions by knowledge; it contains the objective products of knowing born of countless human minds from all areas and periods; and it exists because "all human civilizations depend on a sort of cultural 'book', that is, on the capacity to put information in storage in order to reuse it."[21] The librarian's function is to mediate this interface between the human being and the information encoded in the cultural book, or in other words, to maximize human interaction with cultural knowledge through symbols. This function cannot be performed properly unless librarians comprehend both ends of the man-document interface and the symbolic modes of human interaction. Thus, they must understand people as minds engaged in thought, the human need of objective knowledge (which lies beyond the minds that study it), and the human use of symbols as the means by which people communicate with each other and with their cultural environment.

The importance of the man-document interface cannot be overemphasized. It provides the first three elements of librarianship; the librarians constitute the fourth element; the fifth and sixth elements consist of everything involved in the interactions of librarians with objective knowledge and with patrons; and the seventh element is librarianship itself--the system, good or bad, which the librarians create by integrating the five elements at their disposal. This basic interface also discloses two views, two modes of inquiry, and nine problem areas of librarianship: the two views are the philosophical view of the library educators, who must understand the totality

of librarianship and explain it as a field of study, and the pragmatic view of the library practitioners, for whom librarianship is an occupational activity; the two modes of inquiry are basic research, which builds conceptual knowledge of librarianship as an integrated whole in relation to all of its parts and functions, and ad hoc investigation, which aims at resolving the service problems of practitioners; and the nine problem areas arise because problems can occur anywhere in relation to the seven elements and the two views of librarianship. Thus, the man-document interface constitutes the central concern of the librarians and their educators. It underlies everything they do: there would be no librarianship if it were not absolutely real; and its tremendous significance invites attention and deserves intensive exploration.

Librarianship and the Three-world Philosophy.--The physical realities of matter and energy enjoy first-order status in all of the empirical disciplines. In intellectual disciplines like librarianship, however, they have only second-order status as symbolic instruments for communicating the formal realities of mind. The intellectual nature of librarianship, as a matter of fact, can be revealed with remarkable clarity by identifying its basic components with the three worlds of Karl Popper. The patrons as informational animals, as thinkers searching for knowledge outside of themselves, are intelligent conscious subjects belonging to World 2; the objective knowledge sought by patrons belongs to the cultural environment of World 3; and the librarians as information professionals--as experts who must understand both the subjective knowledge-seeking of patrons and the objective knowledge patrons seek--are also intelligent conscious subjects who belong to World 2. This raises a most revealing question: Where is World 1, the physical environment of natural phenomena in the world of matter and energy studied by the observational methods of empirical science? World 1 pertains only indirectly to the basic components of librarianship because its physical realities do not include the subjective processes or the objective products of knowledge. Thus, its significance is strictly confined to the interfaces of librarianship where it functions instrumentally as machinery, since the physical objects and processes which enable human beings to communicate with objective knowledge and with each other are all derived from World 1; and the role of World 1 in librarianship is thereby reduced to furnishing people with

raw materials for constructing the symbolic instruments of human communication. It should be noted, furthermore, that librarians, who are intimately involved with intersubjective communication and with the form-to-subject kind of intrasubjective communication so familiar to the humanist, have virtually no involvement with the fact-to-subject kind of intrasubjective communication which is absolutely indispensable to the scientist. The reason for this is basic: librarianship is not concerned with physical realities, or for that matter, with formal realities; it is concerned with human subjective reports about realities, reports which must either be communicated directly by human beings themselves or indirectly by means of formal objects created by human beings. There are no other ways of communicating human subjective reports.

Summary and Conclusion.--Librarianship is the management of knowledge, not the management of nature.[22] It is controlled by ideas, not by phenomena, since it responds to the subjective need of minds in World 2 for objective knowledge in World 3. But the abstract forms of subjective and objective knowledge are wholly unobservable: they cannot be seen, heard, smelled, touched, tasted, or otherwise detected by the senses. Thus, knowledge, which completely transcends the physical realities of World 1, must be studied philosophically: it does not qualify as an object of scientific study because the human mind, which constitutes the source and the subject matter of librarianship, "is distressingly invisible, and a science with invisible content is likely to become an invisible science."[23] This means that knowledge must be communicated by using the physical resources of World 1 as symbols which refer the mind to ideas in Worlds 2 and 3. The communication of knowledge, furthermore, must never be confused with the physical means by which knowledge is communicated.

The human use of symbols underlies all of the information-related problems of the twentieth century. Symbolism has caused the modern knowledge explosion, which overwhelms everybody with its recurring tidal waves of information; and it has launched a sophisticated effort to bring our ever deepening oceans of symbols under the control of electronics technology. The informational concerns which pervade all aspects of society lie at the very heart of librarianship; but the librarians have tried to deal with them through information science, which concentrates on the technical aspect of

communication systems, ignores the human aspects of communication, and reduces knowledge to the physical manifestations of writing or of speech.[24] The management of knowledge, however, is much more than the refinement of technology. Building bulldozers for pushing visual characters around or improving our ability to transmit electronic signals can be tremendous aids to communication; but they are not communication. Knowledge cannot be managed, as a matter of fact, unless the complex interplay of physical symbols with their ideative referents is understood and controlled; and that interplay constitutes a psychophysical relationship of metaphysical essences (ta psychika) with physical existents (ta physika) which is inherently conventional and arbitrary--a dualistic relationship of incommensurables that must be learned, like the vocabulary of a foreign language is learned, because it contains no natural connections for science to discover.

The symbolic interaction of physical symbols with ideative referents provides the mind's only means of access to the private knowledge of other minds or to cultural knowledge. Symbols are not merely natural phenomena. They are factual data whose physical forms are controlled by the mind in order to facilitate human communication. The information problem therefore presupposes a fundamental distinction between physical data in World 1, or the factual phenomena analyzed by science, and physical data-as-symbols in World 1, or factual objects and processes which function as the human instruments of rational communication. Thus, the natural phenomenon is per se a substantive id quod, that physical reality which is studied; but the symbolic phenomenon is an instrumental id quo, that physical object or process by means of which ideas are studied and communicated.

This distinction confronts librarians with two choices: they can be notation mechanics who become electrochemical experts in order to work with the physical expressions of knowledge as engineers or sophisticated tool crib attendents; or, they can work with the formal abstractions of knowledge through an instrumental physics of expression as intellectual cartographers whose function is to map the human cultural environment. That they have already chosen the former is the fear of this paper; but its hope is that they might at least consider the latter.

ENDNOTES: Librarianship and the Cultural Environment

1.Paraphrased from Shera's question, "What is a book, that a man [may] know it, and a man, that he may know a book?" Shera's question is in turn paraphrased from Warren McCulloch's question to Rufus Jones, "What is a number, that a man may know it, and a man, that he may know a number?" See Jesse H. Shera, Knowing Books and Men ... (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1973), 65.

2.On the nonscientific nature of "what is" questions, see Karl R. Popper and John C. Eccles, The Self and its Brain (New York: Springer International, 1981), viii, 9, 100, 105 n.2, 172, 175, 193, 552-54, etc. Eccles, Popper's scientific coauthor, is an internationally reknowned neurophysiologist and Nobel Prize recipient for cell research.

3.See my article, "The Immateriality of Information," Journal of Library History, 11 (1976), 297-315, which opposes the physical concept of information as graphemes, phonemes, or electronic impulses.

4.Eduard Zeller, Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1920-23), I, 195-96.

5.Bertrand Russell, The Problems of Philosophy (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 100. See also John Herman Randall, The Making of the Modern Mind ... (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 46-47.

6.See Randall, The Making of the Modern Mind, 219-23 for the modern emphasis on method.

7.Edwin A. Burtt, In Search of Philosophic Understanding (New York: New American Library, 1965), 3.

8.Ibid., 4, 6.

9.Cf. references by Shera and Ralph Munn to the librarian as "a missionary of the human mind ... who feels that his work is a mission," Jesse H. Shera, The Foundations of Education for Librarianship (New York: Becker and Hayes, 1972), 247.

10.John C. Eccles, "The Mystery of Personal Existence," Scholar and Educator, 7 (No. 1, Spring, 1983), 7.

11.John C. Eccles, The Human Psyche ("Gifford Lectures," 1978-79; New York: Springer-Verlag, 1980), 168.

12.Eccles, "The Mystery of Personal Existence," 7.

13.Eccles, The Human Psyche, 168.

14.Popper and Eccles, The Self and its Brain, 47.

15.For Popper's criticism of psychophysical parallelism see ibid., 176-89, 194, 196-205, 361, 372, 441, 471-72, 474, 494, 498-99, 502-503, 507, 510-524, 532-33, 564, and elsewhere throughout his many writings.

16.Eccles, "The Mystery of Personal Existence," 8.

17.Ibid.

18.Popper and Eccles, The Self and its Brain, 37.

19.Eccles, "The Mystery of Personal Existence," 10.

20.See the venn diagram in Conrad H. Rawski, ed., Toward a Theory of Librarianship: Papers in Honor of Jesse Hauk Shera (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1973), 128, and the discussion which accompanies it.

21.Eric A. Havelock, Preface to Plato (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1963), vii.

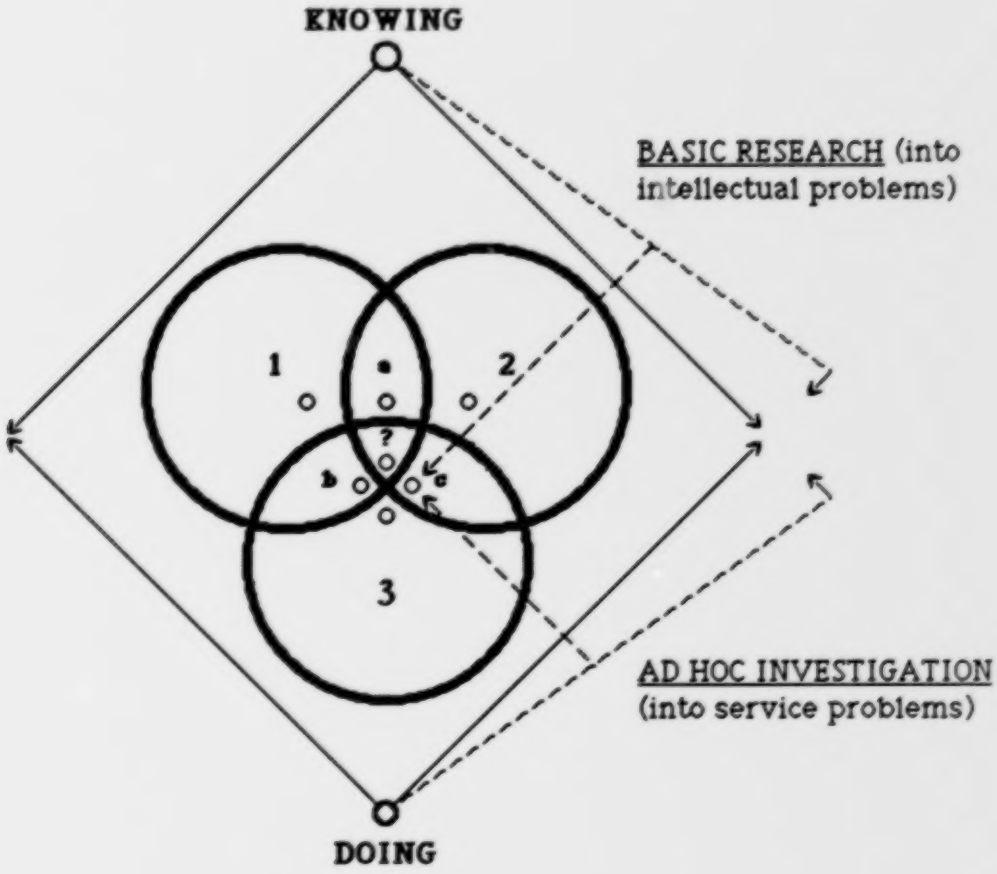
22.See Jesse H. Shera, Libraries and the Organization of Knowledge, ed. D. J. Foskett (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1965), 176.

23.G. A. Miller, E. Galanter, and K. H. Pribam, Plans and the Structure of Behavior (New York: Holt, 1960), 6.

24.For Shera's criticism of information science, see H. Curtis Wright, "Shera as a Bridge between Librarianship and Information Science," Journal of Library History, 20 (1985), 142-52.

LIBRARIANSHIP: its seven elements, two views, nine problem areas, and two modes of inquiry[1]

I. The View from Above: Librarianship as a field of study



II. The View from Below: Librarianship as a professional activity

KEY

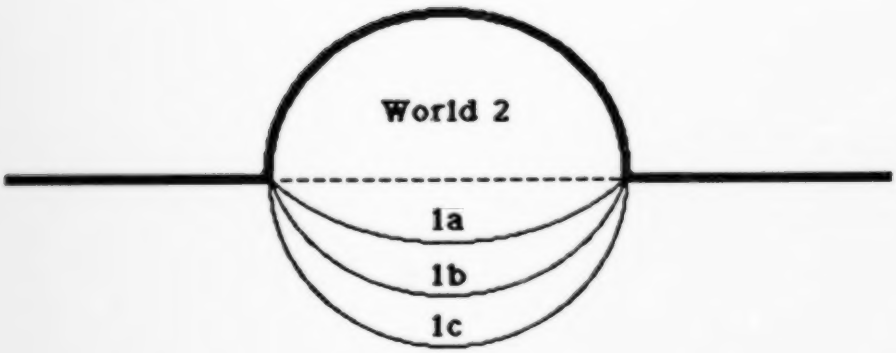
1: The patron (as a thinker who knows things)
2: The cultural environment (of available objective knowledge)
3: The librarian (as mediator of the man-document interface)
a: The man-document interface
b: The librarian-patron interface
c: The librarian-document interface
I: The philosophical view of librarianship as a whole
II: The pragmatic view of librarianship as an occupation

?: The integrated system of librarianship
○: A typical problem (one of 9 types)

[1]Adapted from Rawski's "The Principal Concerns of Librarianship" in Conrad H. Rawski, ed., Toward a Theory of Librarianship: Papers in Honor of Jesse Hauk Shera (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1973), 128.

THE THREE WORLDS OF KARL POPPER

World 3



World 1

KEY

World 2.-- Everything subjective: the inidividual human mind; the personal consciousness of an intelligent self (with all of its knowledge processes, experiences, etc.)

World 3.-- Everything objective and thinkable: the human cultural environment; all ideas (imperceptible subsistents) available for study outside of World 2.

World 1.-- Everything objective and sensible: the physical environment; anything the human mind can detect by means of the senses (with or without a sophisticated artificial technology).

1a: the liaison brain
1b: the rest of the brain
1c: the rest of the body